

The bill clerk read the nomination of Stephen Hahn, of Texas, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Stephen Hahn, of Texas, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Shelley Moore Capito.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 452.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Aurelia Skipwith, of Indiana, to be Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Mitch McConnell, Thom Tillis, Richard Burr, Pat Roberts, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, John Boozman, James E. Risch, John Barrasso, John Thune, Roy Blunt, Lamar Alexander, Mike Braun, Shelley Moore Capito.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator for Louisiana.

5G

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last week, of course, was Thanksgiving, a day that we all set aside in America to count our blessings. As we do that, we always say to ourselves: Gee, we really ought to be thankful every day of the year for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon us.

I know I say that to myself. So I thought today, for a few minutes, I would mention two things that I am especially thankful for, even though this isn't Thanksgiving, but it is another day that the Lord has blessed us with.

The first thing—and there are many things that I am thankful for, but the first thing I am thankful for that I want to mention today is the many public servants who care for and protect American taxpayer money.

I want to highlight one in particular: the Chairman of our FCC, Mr. Ajit Pai. Let me explain why I am thankful for this public servant—one among many who get up every day and work hard to protect taxpayer money. About 2 weeks ago, the Chairman of the FCC, over many obstacles, announced that he was going to hold a public auction for the C-band.

Why is that important?

We all have a cell phone now, and many of us have iPads and computers. The internet has changed our world and changed our lives. It has made it more complicated, of course, but on balance, I think the internet has been good for our lives.

We are about to move into a new phase of telecommunications called 5G. It stands for fifth generation. It is really an extraordinarily fast internet. It can carry huge amounts of data. The ingenuity of the American people takes my breath away.

I am pretty impressed with 4G, and 5G is going to be 100 times faster. It is going to make things possible like telemedicine, where a specialist in a field of surgery through robotics and now an incredibly fast internet can operate on a sick patient 1,000 miles away and save his or her life, thanks to 5G. We will be able to hook up all of our devices through 5G, saving time. It will give us more precious time to spend with our family. There will be driverless cars. Maybe I will not see them in my lifetime, but our assistants and our pages in the Senate will see them in their lifetime.

I could go on, but the point is, to make 5G possible, a lot of people have to work together. So 5G is made possible through the airwaves. When internet devices talk to each other, data in the form of radio waves—the scientists call them electromagnetic radiation—these radio waves go through the airwaves from one device to another.

We have all sorts of different airwaves. It is called spectrum. We have airwaves for radios and TVs. Well, 5G can be used in a number of different

airwaves or different parts of the spectrum. But one part of the spectrum, one part of the airwaves, is just perfect for 5G. It is called the C-band. That part of the airwaves is able to carry these 5G radio waves in a manner that can cover a huge geographical area but also carry lots of data.

It is called the C-band, and it is perfect for 5G. It is perfect. It is not too hot, not too cold. It is just right.

Some swamp creatures, both in government and out, came that close—that close—to getting control of the C-band, which is owned by the American people. Led by three foreign satellite companies, they had almost convinced the powers that be to give them the C-band—just give it to them—and let them decide who is going to get to use that C-band for 5G.

Oh, and, by the way, in picking the telecommunication companies that would get to use the C-band that was going to be given to them for free by the powers that be, these foreign companies were going to get to keep the money—about \$60 billion. That is just the upfront money—\$60 billion. That would build 7,000 miles of interstate in this country.

Not only would the companies get the \$60 billion, they would get to decide who could use the C-band, and they were that close. But the Chairman of the FCC stopped it. He is going to recommend next week—and I hope the rest of the FCC goes along with it. I am going to be there to watch. He recommended and is going to recommend that we have a public auction.

Doing a public auction is nothing new for the FCC. The FCC auctions off different airwaves all the time. In fact, the FCC in the last 25 years has held right around 100—I think it is 93—public auctions where anybody who wants to, any company that wants to—competition, moral good—can come in and bid on that part of the airwaves.

The good people at the FCC have brought in to the American taxpayer about \$123 billion in the last 25 years by auctioning off these airwaves and giving everybody a fair chance in a fully transparent way in front of God and country. That is the way it ought to be.

But a lot of swamp creatures were pushing hard for this private sale. The American taxpayer not only would have lost \$60 billion, they would have lost control of the C-band, which, according to the Communications Act, doesn't belong to me, doesn't belong to the businesses; it belongs to the American people.

We can't let our guard down. I have learned in my short 3 years here that those swamp creatures—if they can't get in the front door, they are going to try the side door, and if they can't make it through the side door, they are going to try the back door. We have a lot of money at stake here, so we have to remain vigilant.

I want to thank Ajit Pai for standing up. He made the right people mad.

That is easy to talk about, but it is hard to do. It takes courage, and he did it, and I wanted to single him out.

The second thing I want to say I am thankful for, among so many things, is this: I am so thankful for our neighbors to the North—Canada. I have visited Canada so many times. I am so proud to call them friends. There are 37 million people in Canada, some of the finest people that God ever put breath in.

We have fought together in wars. We have fought for freedom that we all take for granted. We trade with each other. I mean, the country is just a wonderful country with extraordinarily friendly, decent, and God-fearing people.

Our leaders squabble sometimes. That is just the way life is. Sometimes good friends have disagreements. We are having a few little disagreements right now. But on this beautiful Thursday, I just wanted to come and say how thankful I am that Canada is our friend and how honored I am to call them friends and how grateful I am for all 37 million of the fine men, women, and children in that great country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD BANK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to discuss two issues: one dealing with the World Bank and another one dealing with the Department of Defense's inability to get clean audits.

Today the World Bank is releasing its country partnership framework with China. Reportedly, this includes \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion of loans to China per year and \$800 million to \$1 billion in private sector investment.

Keep in mind that the World Bank was created to help economic development in the world's poorest countries. China is now the world's second largest economy after the United States. Also, the United States is the World Bank's largest contributor. I think many Americans would question why so many American tax dollars are going to support low-interest loans in China.

In China, there is a large and growing body of evidence of human rights abuses in Xinjiang, including mass internment camps. Reports indicate that these camps are centers for social control and political indoctrination. Chinese authorities reportedly mistreat or even torture detainees, while requiring them to engage in forced labor and to renounce their religion and their culture. Yet the World Bank has supported a program called Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project in Xinjiang Province.

This is wording very close to what the Chinese Communist Party

euphemistically calls its internment camps. Plus, one reporter has uncovered documents that these schools purchased barbed wire, tear gas, and body armor using other funds—and, of course, funds are fungible.

Institutions like the World Bank have a great responsibility to further assess critical human rights risk and religious freedom, such as those exhibited in Xinjiang in any region where it lends money.

The World Bank's own social framework standards state that when assessing social risk and impacts, the Bank must assess threats to human security and impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of workers and project-affected communities. The Bank and other such institutions cannot adequately assess a project's full impact without monitoring and examining reports of widespread human rights abuses in any local area.

On November 16, the New York Times published leaked Chinese records indicating a coordinated effort going back years, directed by General Secretary Xi, to detain hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslims in internment camps and to unleash the tools of "dictatorship" on the Xinjiang Muslim population. Given these repeated reports about repression in Xinjiang that date back even years, it is hard to see how any project in that region could meet the Bank's social framework standards. There needs to be a periodic internal review of risk assessment mechanisms to ensure that they are appropriately calibrated to capture changing risk profiles.

I question whether the Bank's oversight processes are adequate, given its own assessments saw no issue with these intern camps that go by the professional name of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project—and I am referring particularly to those in Xinjiang Province.

In a statement on August 29, the World Bank stated that it had conducted supervision missions twice a year since the project started and that these missions included a review of social safeguards and a monitoring and evaluation review. The World Bank found "no evidence from subsequent reviews that funds were diverted, misused, or used for activities not in line with project objectives or World Bank policies and procedures."

However, just last month, the Bank raised the environmental and social risk ratings from moderate—the second lowest level—to substantial and then to high—the highest level. It is very disappointing that very little happened in upgrading the risk assessments on this project until after congressional attention, even with an internal whistleblower raising the matter. This seems like a failed process to me when routine audits and a whistleblower complaint do not catch anything, despite increasingly concerning reports in the media about mistreatment and abuse.

I have written a letter to the Bank President, Malpass, asking questions about these systemic concerns. Moreover, I questioned why a country like China, whose economy has far surpassed the threshold at which it is supposed to graduate from rural bank funding, is now and forever still taking loans.

The World Bank was created for a very worthwhile purpose—to help poor countries that cannot, on their own efforts, assess capital markets.

Both China and Russia today have well surpassed the World Bank's graduation threshold and have access to capital markets. Yet American taxpayers are called on to do more. Yet China then continues to borrow, on average, \$2 billion a year from the World Bank, making it one of the Bank's top borrowers—the second largest economy in the world and one of the Bank's top borrowers.

Countries like China or Russia that have seen the most economic progress should not seek to maintain access to the Bank's preferential lending rates and technical support. Moreover, these are our two major geopolitical foes.

I have previously highlighted China's intellectual property theft and foreign influence activities at American universities as just an example of other things I looked at in the case of China.

Russia's illegal occupation of territory in Georgia and Ukraine and its "active measures" against democracies, including the U.S. democracy, make it effectively an outlawed state. Meanwhile, China does substantial foreign lending of its own, which it uses as a tool of geopolitical influence over other countries.

Now, just think, through the World Bank, they get U.S. taxpayer dollars, and then the country is still so rich that they can lend to many other nations around the world to increase the geopolitical influence of China, and that country's lending does not follow international development finance standards, nor does China disclose the amounts or terms for loans that it offers.

Through the Belt and Road Initiative in China—this initiative is a process where they invest in other countries to have Chinese influence in these other countries—this Belt and Road Initiative in China has raised concerns about debt sustainability in recipient countries. They can invest money in these countries, and then they have an agreement that if the loan isn't paid, then China takes over, enhancing their influence—a lot of it for military purposes.

A March 2018 report from the Center for Global Development assessed the current debt vulnerabilities of the countries I just referred to, identified as potential Belt and Road Initiative borrowers. Out of the 23 countries determined to be vulnerable to debt distress, the center identified 8 countries "where Belt and Road Initiative appears to create the potential for debt

sustainability problems, and where China is a dominant creditor in the key position to address these problems.”

The World Bank, again using American tax dollars, should not be lending to wealthy countries that violate the human rights of their citizens and attempt to dominate weaker countries through their loans, whether it is done for military reasons or for economic reasons.

The State-Foreign Operations appropriations bill contains funding and authorization for a large capital increase for the World Bank. In other words, what I just said—the Senate is going to be facing this issue. I have developed an amendment to this bill that would insert language requiring the U.S. representative to the World Bank to work to defeat any project in a country that has reached the World Bank’s own “graduation threshold” and, secondly, that is designated by the State Department as a “country of particular concern for religious freedom” or is on the watch list for such designation. Both of those would include China and Russia at this point. Countries with broadly documented violations of international norms, human rights, and religious freedoms should not be given the privilege of accessing preferential loans that then limit access to other countries in need.

In other words, the second largest economy in the world—China—by getting loans from the World Bank at the same time they violate the human rights of their people—developing countries that need the loans and resources are not getting them because they are going to the wealthy nations.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. President, now to my second and last issue of the day, I want to report on the Pentagon’s most recent audit. Unfortunately, I don’t come with tidings of comfort and joy. Instead, I come with tidings of bad news. The Department of Defense has flunked another test of fiscal fitness yet again.

Last year, Congress authorized more than \$700 billion for the Department of Defense. That is a heck of a lot of money. That is why it is a big deal that the Pentagon is unable to account for the hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars it spends from one year to the next year.

Every dollar that Congress approves for the Defense Department is crucial for our national security. We must ensure that America’s sons and daughters in uniform are well paid and well equipped to defend our great country. That is why I work tirelessly to hold the Pentagon accountable.

The good news is, I am Iowa-stubborn. As a taxpayer watchdog, I won’t let go of this bone until I see results.

There is always bad news after you announce good news, so the bad news is that the Pentagon’s books are a big fiscal mess. In fact, the Defense Department is the very last Federal agency to comply with a Federal law—decades old—requiring an annual audit.

It took 28 years after Congress enacted a law requiring every Federal agency to conduct an annual audit for the Pentagon to get its ducks in a row. Unfortunately, the results are not what they are quacked up to be.

As required by the 1990 Chief Financial Officers Act, the bean counters at the Department of Defense disclosed their financial assessments for fiscal year 2019 to the Office of Inspector General, and then the IG deployed 1,400 auditors to 600 sites around the world. These 1,400 auditors at 600 different sites surveyed \$2.9 trillion in assets and tallied \$2.8 trillion in liabilities. After spending \$1 billion to conduct this audit, the Department of Defense inspector general was unable to issue a clean opinion, and that is the goal we seek.

Just like other Departments can get clean opinions, why can’t the Defense Department do so? The case is that year after year, the Pentagon is unable to account for tax dollars coming in and tax dollars going out.

Let me clarify for everyone listening just what happens when big spenders aren’t held accountable. Tax dollars are ripe for wrongdoers to harvest, and in the sprawling bureaucracy that we call the Defense Department, with bases and contractors stationed around the globe, Pentagon spending is vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse.

As a Pentagon watchdog, I have approached this podium nearly 50 times over my years of service here in the Senate to continually call attention to this wasteful spending by the Department of Defense. At the same time, I haven’t avoided calling attention to wasteful spending in any agency of the Federal Government, but the Department of Defense has gotten the majority of my attention. During this period of time, I have written countless oversight letters and launched scores of investigations. I have encouraged my colleagues to ramp up their oversight work so we can work together to fix what is broken.

The top dogs at the Pentagon have undertaken countless reform efforts, so I am not saying they don’t recognize it and try to do something about it, but after all these decades, they have not succeeded.

At the same time, besides undertaking countless reform efforts, they have issued endless promises. They have testified that real solutions are underway. Yet the results of the fiscal 2019 audit leaves this Iowa Senator underwhelmed. Tax dollars are still leaking through the Pentagon ledgers like a sieve. The plumbing is broken. When the fiscal faucets are cranked wide open, at full throttle, with no internal controls welded in place to prevent leaking, tax dollars are flushed down the drain.

Over many years of oversight, dozens of top dogs at the Defense Department and the top brass of U.S. military have come to my office to offer explanations for wasteful spending, particularly

after the Pentagon is on the receiving end of unflattering headlines. They have polished their skills when it comes to dodging tough questions posed by my oversight letters. They are also well prepared to rationalize hundreds of billions of dollars for their budget.

It is entirely reasonable and the responsibility of each of our lawmakers, including this one, to expect that they also have the ability to show us where the money goes. I have approached dialogue with our Nation’s military leaders in good faith, but time and again, I have been disappointed. The Defense Department’s inability or unwillingness to make necessary and overdue changes is quite unacceptable. The buck stops here, of course. As representatives of the American people, we owe it to our constituents.

The Defense Department is the largest Federal agency. Over time, bureaucrats get wrapped up in a culture of go along to get along. Some insiders take the brave step to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, and abuse; however, many are afraid to follow suit. That is why it is so important to inject a dose of reality into that swamp.

What is really needed is a massive transfusion to change the mindset. We have a lot of history, so let me remind my colleagues, Washington is an island surrounded by reality, and when it comes to fiscal responsibility, the Pentagon operates on its own special fantasy island. That is why Congress can’t rubberstamp the Defense Department’s budget with no accountability for how the money is spent.

Every time a new defense authorization funding bill is due in Congress, military leaders speak to the ever-changing threats facing our country. Those same military leaders plead for additional funding to defend our Nation, fight our enemies, and protect our interests abroad. Those military leaders discuss the growing threat of cyber attacks, aging and obsolete equipment, and say that cuts to their budget would hurt our men and women in uniform.

National defense, as we all know, is the No. 1 priority of the Federal Government under the Constitution, so Congress is understandably reluctant to deny money that military leaders say they need. That, in turn, is the reason earning a clean audit is shoved to the back burner at the Defense Department.

Congress and the Pentagon need to reach an understanding. Fiscal accountability and military readiness are not mutually exclusive. It is not an either/or scenario. Earning a clean bill of fiscal health would strengthen military readiness and boost support for necessary increases to defense spending in Congress and among the American people.

Money somehow seems to simply get lost at the Defense Department. It is unreasonable to concede that it is OK for military inventory to vanish into thin air. It boils down to sloppy bookkeeping and antiquated accounting

systems that can't generate reliable transaction data.

The problem starts at the top and filters down throughout the five quarters of the Pentagon. Let's consider the recent debacle with the TransDigm Group. In February, the Defense Department's Office of Inspector General released a report on spare parts that the Pentagon purchased from TransDigm. The result of that report exposed the rinse-and-repeat fiscal shenanigans corroding the accounting systems at the Pentagon. In the report, the IG analyzed 113 contracts between January 2015 and January 2017. It reviewed 47 spare parts the Defense Department purchased from TransDigm. In that window of time of only 2 years, TransDigm overcharged the Defense Department by more than \$16 million.

I will go out on a limb and suggest that Americans would rather spend \$16 million for the Defense Department on our men and women in uniform rather than overpaying for spare parts rip-offs to a defense contractor.

Congress can't sign blank checks to the Defense Department. We must work to ensure every dollar is present and accounted for. The Nation's strongest military in the world is managed by a Defense Department where taxpayer dollars seem to vanish without explanation, without receipts, and without accountability. Over the years, I have collected a laundry list of Pentagon waste, fraud, and abuse from \$436 hammers to \$640 toilet seats, \$117 soap dish covers, and \$999 pliers. Most recently, I have exposed \$1,200 reheatable coffee cups and \$14,000 toilet seat lids. The dirty laundry just keeps piling up, and at the same time it is piling up, it is soaking the taxpayer.

These wasteful expenditures represent just the tip of an iceberg. The simple truth is the Defense Department can't keep track of or doesn't seem to care where tax dollars are spent. Internal controls are weak and, in some cases, nonexistent. That has been reinforced by this second audit for which the Department of Defense inspector general can't give a clean audit.

For a second time, I would suggest that what the law of 28 years ago tries to accomplish is that every Department get a clean audit—a clean opinion on their audit. Let me repeat for a second time that the Defense Department is the only agency of the Federal Government that can't do that. The Defense Department, repeating again, is the only agency that hasn't been able to deliver a clean audit, despite spending billions of dollars to modernize its accounting system. All of that investment hasn't produced better systems.

No one except me and a few others ever talk about this, but it needs to be talked about and talked about a lot more, and it needs to be talked about in a deliberate way and very often. Congress can't allow the Defense Department to sweep this issue under the rug year after year.

The TransDigm fiasco is just one very small example, even though it cost the taxpayers a lot of wasted dollars. Price gouging has been going on for years at the expense of the taxpayer and military readiness. Top-level managers know all about what I am talking about, but they aren't doing a doggone thing to fix it. People must be held accountable for missing receipts, for lost financial information, for wasteful spending approvals, for questionable contracting agreements, and every other abuse of power that leads to more taxpayer dollars being squandered.

American households across the country scrutinize their spending and keep tabs on their bills. The Defense Department should approach spending no differently. That is why I pushed for an amendment to the latest Defense authorization bill that would have required the Pentagon to keep better track of its contracts and to make sure they do make reports to the Congress. While this amendment was ultimately not included in the bill, I want my colleagues to know that I am going to continue to push for more accountability.

Throughout my years of oversight, the Pentagon officials have claimed they want to reverse the cycle of cost overruns; they want to clean up their books; and they want to hold people responsible. Yet it never seems to happen. Although I am encouraged by the conversations I have had so far with new Defense Secretary Esper, the proof is in the pudding. From one administration to the next, it has been the same story. Business goes on as usual.

From the top of the chain of command to the rank and file, there is a pervasive mindset that assumes no one is watching over them and that no one cares. For four decades, this Senator has been watching, and this Senator cares. I am disgusted each time I discover another example of wasteful spending.

So I am here this very day, as I have been dozens of times before in my service in the Senate, to ask my colleagues in both the Senate and House of Representatives to join me in a crusade to stop wasteful spending at the Defense Department. There is a saying that goes something like this: no guts, no glory. Well, wasteful spending is gutting our military readiness and goring the taxpayers. There is no glory in that, and people might wonder then, why does this Senator bother?

I have fought fiscal mismanagement at the Defense Department for these many decades. I have launched investigation after investigation and come to the floor of the Senate to talk until I am blue in the face. Billions of dollars have been poured into a decades-long effort to right the fiscal ship at the Defense Department. The Pentagon has shelled out billions for several hundred partial orders, two complete audits, and endless technology updates to modernize its IT and accounting sys-

tems. Yet no one can tell us when, if ever, a clean audit might be possible. How can that be? After nearly 30 years of effort, there is no solution.

The Department of Defense can develop the most advanced weapons systems in the world, but it can't seem to deploy something as simple and common as an accounting system that is capable of capturing payment transactions and generating reliable fiscal and financial data. That is why it is a cakewalk for crooks to rip into the Pentagon's money sack from both ends and use a front end loader to freeload their way through this money pit.

Without a clean audit on the foreseeable horizon, there is no evidence to catch anyone's hands in the Pentagon cookie jar. The only way we will root out fraud and wasteful spending is by knowing where the money is being spent.

That brings me back to square one as I finish. We need a clean audit and a reliable accounting system. As I mentioned earlier, I am Iowa stubborn, and, by God, I am willing to work with my colleagues and go toe-to-toe with any administration, Republican or Democrat. I will work as long as it takes for us to see eye to eye to hold the Defense Department accountable once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Maryland.

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 25th Conference of the Parties, or COP25, which is taking place in Madrid until December 12 this year. I do so despite the cloud cast by President Trump's announcement of his intention to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement is a landmark effort to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions in an effort to limit the global temperature increase in this century to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels while pursuing means to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.

The COP meetings now routinely represent the largest multilateral diplomatic events in the world. This year's conference is designed to take the next critical steps in the U.N. climate change process. Following agreements on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement COP24 in Poland last year, a key objective is to complete several matters with respect to the full operationalization of the Paris climate change agreement.

Article 28 of the Paris Agreement specifies that after joining, no country can withdraw for 3 years, after which a 1-year waiting period must occur before withdrawal takes effect. The Trump administration recklessly filed withdrawal documents on November 4, 2019, making November 4, 2020, the earliest possible date the United States can be out of the agreement.

Withdrawal could not come at a costlier time. In an analysis I requested to review the Federal approach to prioritizing and funding climate resilience projects that address the Nation's most significant climate risks, the Government Accountability Office notes that there were at least 14 disasters whose costs exceeded \$1 billion each in 2018 alone.

GAO, an independent, nonpartisan agency that examines how taxpayer dollars are spent and is known as the congressional watchdog, reported that the total estimated costs reached at least \$91 billion in damage to public and private property.

"The cost of recent weather disasters has illustrated the need to plan for climate change risks and invest in climate resilience," the report says. "Investing in climate resilience can reduce the need for far more costly steps in the decades to come."

The Paris Agreement establishes a global goal on adaptation that consists of, one, enhancing adaptation capacity; two, strengthening resilience; and three, reducing vulnerability to climate change in the context of the temperature goal of the agreement. It aims at strengthening the national adaptation efforts, including through support and international cooperation. It recognizes that adaptation is a global challenge faced by all, including the United States.

Because U.S. withdrawal will not formally take effect until November 4, 2020, the U.S. team's posture at COP25 remains largely unchanged. A group of dedicated career civil servants will be on the ground.

Moreover, 2 years ago, numerous U.S. States, cities, Tribal nations, businesses, faith groups, universities, and others enhanced their presence at major international events, including COP meetings, to maintain and encourage American progress toward its national climate goals.

I am proud that nearly 100 Maryland pledgers "Are Still In." They comprise dozens of businesses—many small. We have over 10 cities, 6 counties, cultural institutions, faith and healthcare organizations, 20 universities, including my alma mater, the University of Maryland School of Law in Baltimore, and investors, such as the State treasurer of Maryland. They are all still in.

Members of the Senate "Are Still In." I am proud to be leading 38 of my colleagues in S. Res. 404. This bipartisan resolution expresses the sense of the Senate that the United States should be working in cooperation with the international community in continuing to exercise global leadership to address the causes and effects of climate change.

Prior to that, I led a congressional delegation of 10 Senators to COP21 that produced the Paris Agreement in 2015. Then the United States committed to lowering its contribution of greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025.

Business and labor "are still in." In a recent letter, 75 major CEOs and organized labor that are represented by the AFL-CIO stressed the importance of the Paris Agreement and the need for the United States to remain in it. This represents one of the most powerful recognitions ever from the private sector of the economic risks and opportunities that climate change presents to the United States and the world. The December 2, 2019, Joint Labor Union and CEO Statement on the Paris Agreement comprises a group of CEOs who employ more than 2 million people in the United States and union leaders who represent more than 12.5 million workers.

In 2009, at the Copenhagen COP 15, the U.S. helped to drive the creation of goals for developed nations to mobilize \$100 billion in public and private climate finance in 2020. The result was the Green Climate Fund, which helps to fund climate finance investment in low emissions, climate-resilient development.

The Paris Agreement affirmed and extended that \$100 billion goal. Although President Trump has stymied its funding, the fiscal year 2020 State Department and Foreign Operations bill the Senate Committee on Appropriations reported is the most favorable, forward-leaning on multilateral climate assistance in years, funding renewable energy programs at \$179 million and resiliency programs at \$177 million. In addition, the bill commits \$140 million to the Global Environmental Facility and \$10 million to the U.N. climate convention.

We must not forget the cooperation President Trump would have us forget. On a bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has uniformly rejected the President's repeated calls to zero out climate assistance funding. This rebuke represents the true, cooperative spirit of our country, once a global leader on climate issues.

I urge President Trump to reassert our Nation's strong leadership in implementing the Paris Agreement before the next Conference of the Parties. In the meantime, I applaud the courage of the general public, universities, faith-based groups, nonprofits, labor organizations, private sector companies, and State and local governments that have helped to step into the void President Trump created by his withdrawal from this agreement.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the need to pass the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

It is frustrating that we have to continue to speak about this issue. We have been so close for a long time now, but the lack of action on the part of the House leadership continues to unnecessarily delay its ratification.

Our neighbors to the north and south are our natural allies and trading part-

ners; yet our trade policy with them has not been updated in 25 years. The President and his team have worked very hard to get Canada and Mexico to the negotiating table to modernize our trade agreement in a mutually beneficial manner. That hard work has paid off in the form of the USMCA. It is ready for ratification, and the Senate is eager to get that done.

Unfortunately, we are at the mercy of the House, which must act first. The House leadership's refusal to move this trade deal is preventing additional job creation in our country, and it is sending the wrong signal to our trading partners across the globe. We ought to be spurring economic activity by striking fair trade agreements globally, not sitting on our hands and refusing to approve an agreement between two of our top trading partners.

A fair and mutually beneficial trade agreement with our neighbors to the north and south is very important to my home State of Arkansas. Canada and Mexico are No. 1 and No. 2 on the list of the top 10 destinations for Arkansas' exports. Arkansas is one of a handful of States that in recent years has consistently exported more than what it has imported from Canada and Mexico.

The World Trade Center Arkansas, which has played a valuable role in connecting businesses in my State with international partners for over a decade, recently released a report that summarizes trade and jobs data for the Natural State.

The center's report underscores the value trade brings to my State's economy and reinforces the fact that the path to a more prosperous, long-term outlook for Arkansas is through opening additional markets for our farmers, manufacturers, and small businesses. The report notes that, as of September 2019, trade in Arkansas supported nearly 350,000 jobs. This represents approximately 26 percent of the State's total employed labor force. It points to a direct correlation between job numbers and trade, documenting that trade-related jobs in the State have grown six times faster than total employment over the past few years.

More importantly, for our purposes here today, the report underscores just how crucial Canada and Mexico are for Arkansas' economy. The Natural State's exports to Canada amounted to \$1.2 billion last year. Our exports to Mexico totaled \$870 million in that same time span. Combined, these two countries account for a third of Arkansas' total exports. Nearly 69,000 jobs in my State are dependent on trade with Canada, and another 41,000 are tied to trade with Mexico.

Melvin Torres, the center's director of Western Hemisphere and European Trade, praised Arkansas' effective partnership with both countries for creating this "symbiotic and successful relationship." That relationship will only grow with the ratification of the USMCA.

Canada and Mexico aren't just important markets for my State. Each of our States stands to gain with the ratification of the USMCA. This landmark trade deal will create over 175,000 jobs, which will help to strengthen our economy and America's middle class. This overdue modernization of NAFTA will benefit workers in a wide array of industries. Manufacturing, tech, and more stand to gain from the USMCA. It will add much needed certainty for farmers and ranchers, who currently need every market they can get. Rural America is struggling right now, and approving this agreement will provide a shot in the arm for the rural economy.

The ratification of the USMCA, along with the recent deals that have been struck with South Korea and Japan, will show the rest of the world that the U.S. is open for business. Proving that the U.S. is negotiating in good faith to reach mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties that are involved could really move the needle in other ongoing trade standoffs.

The House leadership needs to get on the stick. The USMCA is too important for our Nation's economic future for it to be sitting in limbo while House Democrats focus on partisan goals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EQUAL PAY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this past October, the young women who make up the Burlington High School girls soccer team in Burlington, VT, made a statement: The time for equal pay is now. All they are looking for is for their leaders—leaders like us in Congress—to show the courage to make it happen.

It all began one Friday night in October, when, after scoring a goal to put them ahead in the closing minutes of a game against neighboring rivals South Burlington, four exuberant members of the soccer team removed their jerseys to reveal T-shirts emblazoned with this simple phrase: “#EqualPay.”

The reception to their silent statement was reminiscent of that moment when the U.S. Women's National Team made history in July, winning its second consecutive World Cup title. After a thrilling win over the Netherlands, the stadium in France was filled with chants of “Equal Pay! Equal Pay!”.

One Friday in October, the stands—though smaller—in Burlington, VT, erupted in the same way. The result? Yellow cards for the offending players, issued by a referee bound by the rules of the league.

The young women of the Burlington High School soccer team became overnight sensations. Within a matter of days, they had sold more than 2,000 of their now iconic simple white T-shirts, raising more than \$30,000 to support the Greater Burlington Girls Soccer League. Men were invited to pay an extra \$4 for the \$25 T-shirt: 16 percent of the cost, to represent the pay gender pay gap in Vermont. Their story was reported by local outlets like VT Digger and the Burlington Free Press, and it was featured on “Good Morning America” and on CNN. It even reached across the pond, where the UK's Daily Mail featured the team's advocacy. I ask unanimous consent that the report from VT Digger be printed in the RECORD following these remarks.

The lesson here is simple, and the voices could not be clearer: Equal pay for equal work should not be controversial, nor should it be challenged. Yet today in Vermont, a woman makes \$0.84 for every \$1 earned by a man. In some States, the gap is as wide as 70 percent. It is inexplicable. It is unacceptable. And it needs to stop.

Marcelle and I are proud to support the young women of the Burlington High School soccer team. We proudly wore our #EqualPay shirts outside the U.S. Capitol, standing in solidarity with these young Vermonters and with women everywhere who are simply demanding what should be theirs: equal pay for equal work.

Earlier this year, after the U.S. Women's National Team's inspiring victory at the World Cup, I reintroduced a simple resolution calling for the Federation Internationale de Football Association, FIFA, to immediately eliminate gender pay inequity and treat all athletes with the same respect and dignity, regardless of gender. It is straightforward. It is common sense. And it is past due.

Following the October game, the referee who issued the yellow card bought one of the team's #EqualPay shirts for himself. I find in that action a simple metaphor: There is simply no longer support for arcane practices that never should have existed. We should heed the call of the next generation and end these discriminatory practices, not just in sports but across the workforce. Equal pay for equal work should be the right of every person. It is as simple as that.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the VT Digger, Oct. 22, 2019]

BURLINGTON GIRLS SOCCER TEAM MAKES WAVES WITH EQUAL PAY ACTIVISM
(By Aidan Quigley)

BURLINGTON.—When Burlington girls soccer midfielder Helen Worden knocked in the take-the-lead goal during the team's Friday

night game against South Burlington with under five minutes to play, her team burst into a celebration.

Team members took the opportunity to lift their jerseys up to reveal #equalpay T-shirts underneath, with a few removing their jerseys to show the full #equalpay shirts.

While four members of the teams received yellow cards for removing their jerseys, the celebration—and team's efforts for gender pay equality—went viral over the weekend, with an appearance on “Good Morning America,” coverage on CNN and a slew of supportive messages.

The team was inspired by the U.S. women's national soccer team's campaign this summer during the World Cup. Members of the national team filed a federal lawsuit alleging gender discrimination against U.S. Soccer which stated the women's team generated \$20 million more in revenue than the men's team while earning a quarter of what the men were paid.

Klara Martone, Burlington's senior goalie, said that the players were working hard in school and wanted to bring attention to the pay gap in society.

“The idea that we could work this hard and still make less money just based on our gender is incredible to me,” Martone said. “We want to live in our adult lives in a world where we don't have to worry about making less money.”

The girls have sold 2,000 T-shirts and raised a total of \$30,000 as of Monday afternoon.

Worden went to France this summer and witnessed the United States win the World Cup. A chant after the win stuck with her.

“People were cheering ‘equal pay,’ and it was super inspiring,” Worden said. “So I came back and talked to (my teammates) about it, and said we should contribute in some way.”

Martone said that the team originally planned on wearing “equal pay” T-shirts for a dress-up day near the start of the season. But the idea gained steam, and the team decided to open up T-shirt orders to the community.

Junior right back Ruby Wool said at the start, having the boys soccer team wear the T-shirts was a “big victory” for the team.

“Those small little steps we were taking were so big to us, and with each thing everything is getting bigger,” Wool said. “As of right now, I don't think it's going to get smaller for a while.”

The team was “fuming” when they received yellow cards at Friday's game, Worden said.

As four of the girls received yellow cards, the crowd chanted “equal pay.”

“The good thing about the card was hearing everybody had our back,” senior center back/mid Maggie Barlow said. “That was one of the moments we were like, ‘wow, we have such a big support system.’ It was worth it because that was amazing to hear.”

Coach Jeff Hayes said some members of the South Burlington team came over the referees and requested that they not card their opponents. The cards were an exciting moment for the team, he said.

The four players who received yellow cards had to be temporarily taken out of the game and were not able to check back in before South Burlington equalized minutes later. The game ended in a 1-1 tie.

The effort was applauded by Brandi Chastain, a longtime member of the U.S. national team who famously removed her jersey in celebration of her penalty kick goal which won the 1999 World Cup.

“Thank you @bhsgirlssoccer for standing up, celebrating and taking your jerseys off for #equalpay Proud of you! #rolemodels,” Chastain tweeted Saturday.

Removing a jersey as part of a goal celebration—a popular goal celebration—is an